



HIV in Context: Study Abroad in Tanzania

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STEP Project Category: Study Abroad Project
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Major: Biochemistry

Project Description: For my project, I spent the month of July 2019 in Iringa, Tanzania as a part of an OSU study abroad class focused on Tanzania. The goal of the course was to gain a more holistic understanding of HIV and its treatment in East Africa by interviewing students, visiting healthcare centers, and hearing lectures from our professors.



Why did you select this project?

- Interest in Science- This course has a component of microbiology, and I have an interest in the biochemical basis of disease
- Previous coursework- I have taken classes focused on medical ethics and wanted to dive deeper into the subject
- New experiences- While I could find the opportunity to learn about HIV, I couldn't experience the same perspective from a classroom in Columbus.

What did you learn?

- Common transmission routes for HIV and their cultural implications
- Barriers to diagnosis and treatment as well as solutions in process
- The relationship between research and treatment especially in the minds of those affected by HIV/AIDS
- Methods of research especially involving interviews
- Swahili language with the goal of engaging in small conversation
- Basic history and system in Tanzania to gain insight on everyday life



What was your favorite part of the trip?

To me, the most meaningful part of the trip was getting to meet with people and experiencing their hospitality. It was such a unique and special experience to be invited into a home, a dorm room, or even just conversation with people and learning directly from them.



What made your project transformative?

As a result of this project, the main transformation I saw for myself generally was my overall feeling of independence. Navigating a new space, studying a new language and meeting people whose lives are very different from my own, gave me a new sense of confidence in my own ability. I learned a lot about who I am under pressure, and how I relate to people in a group. I got to explore my leadership style in new situations and assess new abilities by learning from my classmates. As part of this, I gained a new understanding for the lives of classmates, and the importance of public health in each of their life and career goals. I also have explored the importance of public health to my own goals and passions.



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